

Closure order on Plymouth home of former addict extended



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By STUART ABEL Court Reporter

A FORMER heroin addict who made the lives of neighbours a misery has been banned from her home for a further three months.

City magistrates extended the closure order on a city centre flat despite a plea by 52-year-old grandmother Debbie Hill.



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Debbie Hill outside Plymouth Magistrates Court, above. Left: PC Dave Godfrey affixes the closure order to the flat



Plymouth City Council said neighbours were enjoying the peace and quiet since Hill was originally thrown out of the flat in October.

The court heard they had been living in fear of a string of visitors to Hill's flat in Flora Court.



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The council applied to magistrates to extend the order for a further three months, to allow the legal maximum six-month period.

The authority wants more time to evict Hill through the civil courts.

Hill, now homeless, contested the extension in a bid to return to the flat when the first order expires on Wednesday, January 2.

As The Herald reported at the time, magistrates heard statements at the first hearing from neighbours complaining of noisy, violent visitors and Hill's threatening and abusive behaviour.

One person said as many as 50 or 60 people would visit the ground-floor flat in a day.

Dylan Sadler, representing the council at the latest hearing, read a statement from one resident on how life had changed since October.

"The trouble has completely stopped," the neighbour said. "There has been no violence, no arguments.

"There is no fear of going out and I can let the children play outside.

"They are not getting woken up at night and are far less anxious. It is lovely."

Mr Sadler told the court if Hill did return to the flat there was a risk the trouble would flare up again because she could not control the stream of violent visitors.

Hill, giving evidence, said it had been a "nightmare" since she was thrown out of the flat.

She said she had been sofa-surfing or staying with her daughter.

Hill added: "That behaviour will never happen again. I won't let anyone in the flat. I just want some peace and quiet."

But the bench extended the order until April 2.

Magistrates granted a "crack house" closure order against the same premises in 2008 amid what the bench ruled was "drug-fuelled" behaviour.

But an appeal against that order was upheld at Plymouth Crown Court and Hill was allowed back into the flat.

An appeal against the current closure order has been rejected by the Crown Court.

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